



The Current

News from IBEW Local 1837

Summer 2022

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - Maine & New Hampshire

Kitty Kilroy Appointed IBEW 1837 Business Representative and Sue Ekola Retires



Kitty Kilroy

Kitty Kilroy has been appointed as a new Business Representative for IBEW Local #1837. Sister Kilroy will have many responsibilities including staffing our Dover, New Hampshire office, following the retirement of Sue Ekola, our secretary for the past 24 years.

“I’m proud to work for the union. I’ve always been honored to be asked to represent people and proud that people have faith in me,” Kilroy said. “I look forward to putting our members first and helping them fight the good fight.”

In addition to staffing the Dover office, Sister Kilroy will be attending meetings with IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza, assisting with contract negotiations, helping members with representational issues and working to organize new members into the Local.

“Kitty Kilroy has been a very effective advocate for our members,” Sapienza said. “She is well respected

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***Contract Round-up:* Agreements Ratified at Versant Power, WGME-TV, WABI-TV, and Sea-3**

Versant Power Members Ratify 2-Year Contract

IBEW Local Union #1837 members at the electric utility serving a large swath of northern and eastern Maine approved a two-year contract extension offer in April with pay increases for all classifications and no change in their health insurance premiums or other benefits for the term of the extension.

Effective June 1, 2022, all workers received at least a 2% wage adjustment followed by a 3% wage increase in January 2023 and another 3% increase in January 2024. First Class Lineworkers, Electricians and those in Customer Service positions will receive larger pay increases to bring them up to the pay level of workers in comparable jobs at Central Maine Power, Maine’s largest electric utility. A 30-minute paid lunch was added to some job classifications resulting in a 30-minute shorter workday for those workers.

“We’re grateful to our Union Negotiating Team, Stewards, and members for their participation in the process,” IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman said. “Although we thought this was a good deal for our members, we heard from some that weren’t completely satisfied with Versant’s offer and we plan to raise those issues with the Company at upcoming Labor-Management meetings.”

IBEW 1837 represents 226 employees at Versant Power. Versant serves 159,000 customer accounts in northern and eastern Maine. The company is owned by Calgary, Alberta-based ENMAX Corp., and was formerly Emera Maine.

Members at Portland’s WGME-TV Ratify 3-Year Pact

Members of IBEW Local #1837 at WGME-TV 13 in Portland have approved a new three-year contract agreement with substantial raises in 2022 for all members in all job classifications, ranging from 5.2% up to 49.9%. Most members received a wage increase of at least 7% for 2022, followed by an additional 5% over the next two years. The contract vote took place this past December in a church basement near the Portland studios of the CBS affiliate.

IBEW 1837 represents more than 40 people who work behind the scenes at WGME-TV 13 as well as WPFO-TV 23, a Fox affiliate. Both are owned and operated by Maryland-based Sinclair Broadcast Group. These hardworking broadcast professionals include the Operating Technicians, News Editors, Assignment Editors, Photographers, Engineers, Producers, and Directors who create and produce a variety of news and public service programs, commercials, and special projects.

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Contracts Ratified at Versant Power, WGME, WABI and Sea-3

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The contract vote came after a series of union meetings starting in early summer where members prepared contract proposals and discussed the problems they were having at work. Like many workers, they first struggled to do their jobs through the pandemic and later had to contend with a ransomware attack against Sinclair that forced them to scramble just to keep the stations on the air.

When the company's wage offer during negotiations fell far short of what the Union Negotiating Team was seeking, members voted overwhelmingly to reject the Company offer and authorize a strike.

While the Union's lead negotiator continued discussions with a Federal Mediator and Company attorney, members got organized and prepared to strike, painting picket signs, and recruiting volunteer phone tree captains to keep members informed. Eventually, the Company found more money and improved their wage offer, finally showing the appreciation for the value of their employees that they had expressed across the bargaining table. This led to a Union Negotiating Committee recommendation to approve the contract and another membership vote, this time ending in ratification.

"I want to congratulate our lead negotiator Dick Rogers for his great work on this contract," said IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza, "along with the rest of the Negotiating Committee: Chief Steward Jack Amrock, Kaitlyn Hegarty, Matt Beck and Pierre Maurice. They did a great job. I appreciate the unwavering support that our members gave our committee from the very beginning of this process. That's what we need to get good contracts."

"I am proud of our membership," said Chief Steward Jack Amrock. "They had the courage to say 'No, this is not good enough!' While we didn't get everything we were looking for, we have laid the foundation for the future and have sent a message to the Company that we expect to be treated fairly and won't be taken advantage of anymore."

Members at Bangor's WABI-TV Approve 18-month Contract as Changes Loom

IBEW 1837 members at CBS affiliate WABI-TV approved a new 18-month agreement with 2½% increases in January 2022 and in January 2023. Some members also received wage adjustments.

"I'm grateful to Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman for her assistance during these negotiations as well as union member Jordan Verge from WABI-TV," said IBEW 1837 Organizer and Business Representative Matt Beck.

The unusual length of the contract was to allow station owner Gray Television to determine how they wish to proceed with the creation of a new job classification called "Technical Media Producer" that would merge the non-union job classification of Director with our five unionized Operating Techs. The Union and the Company will then be able to negotiate the terms and effects of that proposed change.

Members at Sea-3 in Newington Propane Facility Approve 2-Year Contract Agreement

IBEW 1837 members at Sea-3 approved a two-year contract in June with 5% wage increases each year, July 2022 and July 2023. The agreement includes Sunday premium increases to \$10 per hour and boot allowance increases to \$150 per year. There are no changes to the health plan and the cost sharing. The sick plan is changing to a personal day plan. There will also be a transition from the existing pension savings plan into the union-sponsored National Electrical Annuity Plan.

Sea-3 is a crucial component of the energy distribution system in New England, and one of only about half a dozen liquefied gas-handling facilities operating in the United States. Located on the Piscataqua River, the propane is stored in refrigerated tanks onshore before being distributed to retailers by train and truck. The people who make up the Union at Sea-3 are Operations and Maintenance Personnel who receive, store, and distribute propane at the Newington facility.



IBEW 1837 delegates attending the 40th International Convention in May included President Michelle Crocker, Vice President Bob McNeff, Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman, Business Manager Tony Sapienza and Business Representative Matt Beck.

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by everyone that has had an opportunity to work with her. I'm very pleased that she is joining our staff."

Kitty comes from a proud Union family. Her father organized the United Food and Commercial Workers at the Boston Garden and was an Executive Officer of the Electrician's Union at M.I.T. Kilroy worked for Citizens Bank for over five years before going to work for Eversource (then Public Service Company of New Hampshire). After trudging through deep snow while working as a Meter Reader for 10 years at the Derry Area Work Center, Kitty became a Utility Worker at the Hooksett AWC for 11 years. She was first an Assistant Shop Steward in Derry, then became a Shop Steward for the Union. She twice served on the Union Negotiating Committee for Eversource, was Recording Secretary of the IBEW 1837 Executive Board, and most recently an E-Board Representative for Unit 2.

"I'm honored to have this job and be afforded this opportunity," Kitty continued. "I want to put my hard work to good use for our members."

After 24 years working on IBEW 1837's staff as part-time Secretary based in our New Hampshire office, Sue Ekola has retired. Prior to coming to work for the Local, Sue was an Administrative Assistant at the now-closed Schiller Station Power Plant in Portsmouth before resigning that position in 1988 when her son was born.

Fast forward ten years and Sue was thinking of looking for a part-time job with good pay and close to her son's school when she received a call from IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Tom Clements, offering her exactly that.

"I thought I'd try it for a few weeks and see what happened, and 24 years later I was still there," Sue said. "The best part of the job was getting to know the members. I have no complaints at all. It's hard to say that about a lot of jobs. I enjoyed every bit of it."

In addition to always being a friendly voice answering the phone, first at the IBEW 1837 office in Rochester that she helped set-up, and later in Dover when the office relocated, Sister Ekola was known for her top-notch record-keeping and administrative skills. Her notetaking abilities during contract negotiations were a huge asset to our membership.

Sue's plans are to "do my own thing" during retirement including braiding rugs, helping an elderly neighbor to make her breakfast and babysitting her brand-new grandson Finn twice a week. "It was a privilege to work for the Local," she said.



Sue Ekola with husband Dave and her new grandson Finn

Quick Notes and Announcements

Unit Meetings Suspended for Summer Months

Unit meetings have been suspended for a summer break and most will resume after Labor Day. Some locations may be changed. Please contact your steward, the union office, or log on to www.ibew1837.org and check our website calendar before driving to a meeting. IBEW 1837 is conducting some meetings online using Zoom. Union staff is available to meet on an as-needed basis where meetings are cancelled. You can download an updated schedule at ibew1837.org/meetings.

Members Attend Steward Training Class

Craig Duffy from the IBEW Education Department led an Introductory Steward Class on Saturday, January 15. In addition to staff, 14 new or prospective Stewards attended the class from Eversource, Central Maine Power, WGME-TV, WABI-TV, the Maine Democratic Party, and Kittery Water District. An Advanced Steward Training Class is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 14.

New Mailing Address for IBEW Local #1837 Maine Office

We haven't moved but we are now asking everyone to direct USPS mail to our new P.O. Box. Please send U.S. mail to **IBEW Local #1837, P.O. Box 457, Manchester, ME 04351**. And don't forget to update your mailing address, email addresses, or phone numbers if they change by calling the union office at 207-623-1030 or email union@ibew1837.org.

New E-Board Members Join Leadership Team

Arthur Cornelissen has stepped down from the E-Board and Anita Libby and John Heald have retired. We congratulate them on their service to the Union and welcome Zachariah Bereiter, Eric Proctor and Maxwell Pushaw, who have been appointed to serve as E-Board Reps.



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*Inside Summer 2022 issue of **The Current**:*

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Newsletter of IBEW Local 1837
 207-623-1030 or 603-743-1652

Email: union@ibew1837.org

President - Michelle Crocker

Vice President - Bob McNeff

Recording Secretary - Andrea Williams

Treasurer - Donna Raymond

Business Manager - Tony Sapienza

Assistant Business Manager - Renee Gilman

Business Representative - Kitty Kilroy

Business Rep. / Current Editor - Matt Beck

Maine Democratic Party Staff Joins IBEW 1837!

With the 2022 election cycle heating up, permanent staff at the Maine Democratic Party (MDP) will be represented for the first time by IBEW Local #1837. Contract negotiations recently concluded and party staff approved their first contract with improvements in wages and benefits. In recent years, Democratic candidates and campaign organizations in New England and throughout the country have been organized by IBEW.

“We want to congratulate the staff of the Maine Democratic Party for deciding to join together and form a union to collectively bargain. We’re pleased that they’ve chosen the IBEW to represent them,” said Matthew Beck, IBEW Local #1837 Organizer/Business Representative. “To their credit, the Maine Dems voluntarily recognized their staff’s union, demonstrating once again the party’s support for organized labor.”